Beyond power: Unbridging Foucault and Weber

Juan J. Jiménez-Anca
Aston University, UK

Abstract

Today, very few would doubt that there are plenty of reasons to liken Weber's and Foucault's theories of power. Nevertheless, their respective works have divergent ethical and ontological preoccupations which should be reconsidered. This article explores Foucault's account of a historical episode in *Discipline and Punish* and Weber's theory of life spheres, uncovering evidence that there is a need to reassess the conceptual bridges which have been built so far. The exploration reveals a radical difference between a monological theory of power (Foucault) and a multidimensional approach to power (Weber). Yet by unbridging the two thinkers and focusing on other aspects of their theories along with their ideas about power, we also find that alternative links between the two frameworks may offer a more promising critical theory.

It is hard to imagine that the analysis of power relations could not benefit from the creation of sites of passage that would allow social scientists and cultural critics to transit between fertile conceptual frameworks such as those devised by Weber and Foucault. Indeed, over the past three decades, scholars have challenged the traditional separation between classical and poststructuralist social theory. Risto Heiskala uses the architectonic metaphor of bridges in this connection: one of his aims is 'to build a bridge' (2001: 241) between theories – including those of Weber and Foucault – which

Corresponding author:
Juan J. Jiménez-Anca, School of Languages and Social Sciences, Main Building NW915, Aston University, Aston Triangle, Birmingham B4 7ET, UK
Email: j.j.jimenez-anca@aston.ac.uk

previously had been perceived as in opposition. Furthermore, Weber has even been read as an outright precursor of Foucault (O'Neill, 1986: 43), and the recent publication of the latter's lectures at the Collège de France has revealed a fair number of ideas shared by Weber and Foucault about the relationships between governmentality and subjectivity, and between state and markets (Steiner, 2008; Colliot-Thélène, 2009). Yet as much as I laud and sympathize with the recurrent reconciliatory gestures of the past few decades, the debate has taken a swift course and it is now time to revisit the ground upon which, to use Heiskala's metaphor, conceptual bridges have been built. Stretching the metaphor a bit further, the crucial question is whether these bridges provide a safe transit from one thinker to the other. Obliviousness may result when transiting is the main option for producing a critical theory of power, and the social and cultural critic does so at the peril of losing sight of the distinctive specificity of the two ends of the bridge.

Indeed, critical comparisons connecting the works of Weber and Foucault have often marginalized the role which the question of the good has in each of their works. To be sure, there are exceptions to this tendency (Fraser, 1989: 17–34; McCarthy, 1990: 460), but previous theorizing about a possible connection between the good and a life beyond power and domination is, for some reason, totally absent in current debates. Comparisons tend to be made, then, not from an impossible neutral position but rather from a Foucauldian perspective which 'dashes the hope, if we had one, that there is some good we can affirm' (Taylor, 1986: 69). As a result, a crucial normative ethical focus may have been overshadowed in endeavours aimed at overcoming differences between Weber and Foucault. In the latter's conception of power as a ubiquitous strategic force, there is no room for an enquiry into the limits of power and how individuals may trespass those limits. For, if power is ubiquitous, then the idea that social agents can step outside of its influence becomes utterly ludicrous, as do all the questions that might be posed thereafter. Contrary to implicitly accepting such a theoretical enclosure, Weber seems to be obsessed with its subversion. In line with the Frankfurt School's political philosophy, Weber does not unreservedly subscribe to the notion that 'there is no escaping the relations and effects of power'; rather, he is closer to embracing a critical approach to authenticity as a revolutionary alternative to instrumental rationality (McCarthy, 1990: 442). Nonetheless, Weber considers the consequence of allowing social agents to step out of power relations to be the very beginning of a conflict of an agonizing nature. Far from the liberation which is associated with certain utopian visions of a society without power, Weber feels that the question of what lies beyond power leads to excruciating dilemmas, unsolvable conundrums, and the beginning of a painful tragedy. After Weber, affirming the good about which Taylor would wish to read more in poststructuralist approaches to power shows an obscure face as well.

All of this is missing when Weber's and Foucault's theories of power are compared and their singularities erased. This is not to say that one of Weber's or Foucault's theories is better than the other, but rather to acknowledge that the analysis of power can be undertaken from very different positionalities. My goal in directing attention to what Weber and Foucault do *not* hold in common is not to negate any possible theoretical alliance which may be the object of perfectly valid investigations. Neither is my stance a relativist one; it is the acknowledgement that the suitability of diverse theories lies in the questions which are being posed rather than in the theories themselves.

The Ubiquity Principle

Foucault thought most urgent the 'need to cut off the King's head' in political theory (1980: 121). This symbolic intervention would involve a revolutionary contestation of theoretical frameworks based on consent, prohibition, legitimacy and sovereignty. Theoretical decapitation would, in turn, advance a paradigmatic shift towards discussions of domination in terms of the controlling mechanisms of the population and governmentality (Hindess, 1995). Rather than assuming that some individuals possess a power which others lack, political theory would address the conceptualization of the instruments and strategic techniques and devices that effect the production of subjects in contemporary societies, in both a philosophical and a political sense. The change in political theory at which Foucault aimed abandons the framework consisting of the modern 'reason of state' and the autonomous individual of liberalism, focusing instead on the mechanisms which effect a regularization of life, conduct and bodies (Foucault, 2003, 2008). As Foucault disseminated his thought not only in academic texts, but also in interviews and lectures, his project was one of continuous self-reflexivity, a trait which may explain the evolution from his early archaeological descriptions of systems of knowledge to the genealogies of power and aesthetic subjectivity (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982; Davidson, 1986). Yet despite all of his divergent exploratory attempts and paths of inquiry, there is a thread of continuity in Foucault's work. This thread may well be described as the *principle of the ubiquity of power*, according to which all socio-historical formations are in effect, in one form or another, a product of what he would call the *will to power-knowledge*. Because of its significance, I shall analyse this principle in more detail before comparing it with the multidimensional approach of Weber.

Despite the fact that Foucault was one of the fiercest defenders of discontinuity and historical ruptures in his early archaeological works, suspicions about the recurring postulation of an unjustified 'ontological priority of power' (Dews, 1987: 175) have taken hold for some time now. Critics of this metaphysical turn have characterized Foucault's thought as taking an oversimplified approach which inadvertently ignores any opposition to power (Dews, 1987: 166; McCarthy, 1990: 445–6). The ontological priority of power has even been traced back to the early Foucault's emphasis on understanding discourse as a human activity. Since Foucault maintained in his coinage of the concept of 'regimes of truth' that social institutions always determine which type of discourse is available, it seems to follow that 'discourse is the surface manifestation of the underlying will to power', which, in turn, ends up shaping all forms of critique (Fox, 1998: 418).

On the one hand, according to this criticism, it seems that Foucault is guilty of reification when he asserts that 'power is everywhere' (1998: 93). Yet Foucault was very aware of this risk, and rather than conceiving of power as an entity or even a structure, he thought of it as a network of devices, techniques, and social and cultural practices (1982: 217). On the other hand, despite this emphasis on historical evolving connections both at a macro and micro level, the monological character of the ubiquity principle has led to a problematic historiographical model because of its 'unidirectional narrative of supersession' (Sedwick, 1991: 46–7). However, Foucault's master narrative is not limited to supersession from one regime of power to the next; more important is the

maintenance of power as the grounding principle without which human life would be impossible. As Foucault writes in 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History':

> Humanity does not gradually progress from combat to combat until it arrives at universal reciprocity, where the rule of law finally replaces warfare; humanity installs each of its violences in a system of rules and thus proceeds from domination to domination. (1977: 151)

The entire history of humanity has been reduced here to the narrative of transitions from one system of domination to another system of domination. The debate whether Foucault was indeed a structuralist looking for universal principles or a sceptical poststructuralist seeking to undermine these, ignores the fact that the ubiquity principle is presented in his genealogies as the ontological ground which prevails in historical transitions. Even if power is understood historically, the Foucauldian genealogy rests on the idea that there *only* is power, so there *was only* power, and so there *will be only* power.

To be sure, Foucault placed as much emphasis on power as he did on counter-discourses and resistance. T.J. Berard dismisses reproaches – such as the well-known criticism of Habermas and Taylor – which characterize Foucault as either a neo-conservative or a fatalist, on the basis that Foucault's theory of power has provided political activists with resources and inspiration (Berard, 2001: 210). Very few would maintain that Foucault held a simplistic view of a power which suffocates and strangulates the subject. He was cleverer than that, and, as Berard puts it, 'if power is everywhere, by Foucault's thinking this means that the possibility of resistance is everywhere, too' (2001: 211). However, even ardent Foucauldians must acknowledge that for the French philosopher, indeed in his very words, 'it seems . . . power *is* ''always already there'', that one is never ''outside'' it' (Foucault, 1980: 141). Despite Foucault's repeated qualifications of the ubiquity principle (which I will discuss in the last section), if power acquires a prevalent metaphysical status through these assertions, it thereby becomes the *only* historical force, and counter-discourses cannot be considered to have their own irreducible, incommensurable logic that is different to that of power dynamics, let alone their own critical value. The criticism that Foucault's genealogy of power is based on a metaphysical monism owes not so much to a lack of attention to resistance and subversion (Foucault said and wrote largely about them), but rather results from his failure to consider alternatives which may have differential ontological value in themselves.

In the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* there are moments in which the space for that *other* logic to emerge seems to shrink even more: 'Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere' (Foucault, 1998: 93). Power's autonomy and status as *the* uncontested historical force are guaranteed by now – not because everything is embraced and encircled by power, but because nothing escapes it. Foucault goes even further to state that the social bond is never communication, but rather wars and battles (1980: 114). That is, we all participate in conflicts in a manner that makes it unthinkable that political forms and social interactions could be based on something other than belligerence and violence. Although it may have seemed otherwise at first, there may after all be a trail of continuity between Foucault and previous Western political discourses, which have heavily relied on an alleged link between violence and power (Steger, 2006).

If the Foucauldian genealogy is Western metaphysics by other means, then its correspondence to actuality also becomes critical. However, it is here that critics have singled out a facet of Foucault's theory that they claim is most in need of revision. C. Fred Alford argues that the 'empirical reality of prison (not the same as the discourses on penology) shows Foucault to be wrong in his conception of power' (2000: 125). Concerning that empirical point of view, Alford learned from his visits to prisons that more often than not officials could not care less about prisoners, and hence that routines such as precise psychological categorizations of individuals and the discipline of a timetable – both of which are so characteristic of what Foucault calls 'panopticism' – are not that important in practice. What matters the most within the prison is to have the exits well shut and the keys in your hand. Threats to power rather come from the possibility of prisoners escaping the prison, of going *beyond* the limits of the carceral space. This possibility of trespassing the boundaries of power is something with which Foucault might never have agreed.

In regard to the connection between theory and actuality, there is a revealing photograph in *Discipline and Punish* of the central tower in the prison of Stateville in the United States. Here the reader sees a visual statement of how Bentham's panopticon, which is 'the diagram of a mechanism of power reduced to its ideal form' (Foucault, 1991: 205), becomes the constitutive core of the social fabric. In addition to serving the purpose of explaining this 'idealistic' rendering of power, the picture also points to a physical construction within a historical setting. Yet Foucault does not seem to address this physicality in *Discipline and Punish.* Alford came to realize during his visits that, as intimidating as it may look, the panoptic tower in the prison of Stateville is of little use today, as inmates avoid surveillance by using blankets and cardboards in their cells. This could not have been appreciated by the reader because, quite strikingly, people are altogether absent from the picture in *Discipline and Punish*. The society of the panopticon which the image is meant to illustrate is actually a society without people. Therefore, this phantasmatic picture-without-subjects may need to be populated so that the narrative of the genealogy of power steers away from what Foucault himself describes as 'idealistic portraits of power' and towards a very different outcome that is closer to the complexities of the actual social fabric.

'Kiss me, gentlemen'

To begin that project, one need go no further than the first pages of *Discipline and Punish*. The book begins with a long quotation in which we can read the sentence given to the regicide Robert-François Damiens in 1757, as well as a detailed account of the brutal torture to which he was subjected (Zévaés, 1933: 201–14; Foucault, 1991: 3–6). The burning of his flesh and the resistance of his limbs to being separated from the rest of his body until they were finally pulled off by six horses evince the brutality of the event. Yet the most striking part comes when, according to the description of an officer of the watch, straight after asking for pardon to the Lord and Jesus and at the very moment of agonic pain with the torture reaching its peak, Damiens commands the people around him: 'Kiss me, gentlemen' (Foucault 1991: 5). Rather than confessing and listing his accomplices' names, as the court had expected to hear, Damiens simply asked for a kiss

from his executioners. The parish priest of St. Paul did not answer his plea, but Monsieur de Marsilly eventually 'slipped under the rope holding the left arm and kissed him on the forehead'; and then Damiens 'told them not to swear, to carry out their task and that he did not think ill of them; he begged them to pray to God for him' (Foucault, 1991: 5).

There are different plausible interpretations for this unexpected behaviour on the scaffold. One interpretation can be constructed with information provided by Foucault himself and by the historian Anne-Léo Zévaès, who wrote the biography of Damiens which Foucault consulted as he wrote the first pages of *Discipline and Punish.* Damiens might have acted as he did in order to gain the sympathy of the public and, as Foucault explains, motivate yet another riot against the hated king. The possibility of rioting was so strong at the time that 'it was the breaking up of this solidarity that was becoming the aim of penal and police repression' (Foucault, 1991: 63). A second plausible motivation could be that the condemned man wanted posthumous glory for exceptional behaviour on the scaffold which could then be recounted in the popular form of gallows speeches (Zévaés, 1933: 54–8; Foucault, 1991: 45). However, although it is entirely possible, the idea that Damiens was acting for either posthumous glory or the solidarity of the public is somehow reductive. It pares Damiens' attitude down to mere instrumental rationality, according to which every action is determined by a previous process of measurement and calculation. Foucault does not suggest any of this; rather, he is interested in providing a contrast with the subsequent development of power in the nineteenth century. Yet should we want to populate the phantasmatic picture of history, we may well focus attention on Damiens' beliefs, fears, expectations and desires, shifting away from the general development of power which the genealogy describes and towards the life of a particular individual. After all, rather than acting as expected, Damiens begged for a kiss, and in receiving it, he was breaking the grammar of power and violence, along with its techniques and expectations, with his body and lips.

A thorough biographical investigation might reveal that Damiens was not only a regicide but also a Christian, and plausibly a Catholic. He may then have believed in the afterlife and may therefore have been highly concerned that his sudden death and the shattering of his flesh would mean the impossibility of redeeming his sins in this life. If Damiens believed this, then the target of the punishment would be not, as Foucault argues, simply his body, but, shrewdly, his ideas, hopes and fears as well. Foucault argues that pain in the scaffold could have been interpreted as a penitence to God (1991: 46); yet, although Damiens asked the Lord for pardon several times, orthodoxy states that pardon cannot be given without the final resignation which he never gave. In sentencing him to death, their intention was to condemn not only his body but also his soul.

Damiens could read and count and, although he was not highly educated, behind his actions there was substantial knowledge along with a great concern about his country's social and economic situation (Zévaés, 1933: 43–63). There are accounts from the time he spent with the Jesuits which portray him as a quiet, reserved and meditative individual who also happened to have a very odd character. Some people considered him to be anticlerical, insofar as he harshly and publicly criticized the church on several occasions. It is therefore surprising to learn that, when Damiens was detained, he had a book of prayers in his pocket and that later on he declared that his actions were merits for gaining

a place in heaven. The combination of his criticism of the church and the book of prayers invalidates the interpretation of Damiens as a prototypical Catholic, but how do we make sense of all these contradictions? How did he conceive of the relationships between faith, social justice and politics?

Apart from the long quotation at the beginning of the book, Foucault does not take much interest in Damiens, let alone his kiss. Yet by foregrounding this small bodily gesture, a different history of power may now be written. This would be a return from the general to the particular; and so, our study could, for instance, take the form of a micro-historical narrative. One year after Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* came out, Carlo Ginzburg published his well-known *The Cheese and the Worms*, in which he described the unorthodox cosmology of Menocchio, a sixteenth-century miller from the Friuli, who was persecuted by the Inquisition. Ginzburg 'diagnoses' that Mennochio's peculiar cosmological ideas were influenced by a centuries-old peasant subculture and, however problematic his microhistoric methods may be, we might discover that, like Mennochio's ideas, Damiens' kiss was not casual and sudden but was in fact part of an ancient practice. In this microhistorical sense, Damiens might have been reverting to an obliterated practice such as the Early Christians' *osculum pacis* ('kiss of peace').

Before the fourth century, the *osculum pacis* was practised as a physical transference of spiritual love and a grounded ritual of reconciliation and peacemaking. Some scholars argue that the spontaneity of the kiss was lost soon after that, as by the fourth and fifth century it proved to be a useful tool to define the boundaries of social groups and the politics of orthodoxy and heterodoxy (Lowrie, 1955; Penn, 2003). By the thirteenth century, the *osculum pacis* began to be superseded or to disappear altogether as a spiritual expression of love in each of the Christian groups. Although it has been revived as part of the weekly service at some denominations today, the oblivion of this practice is obvious in the scaffold on which Damiens was executed, as the parish priest of St. Paul did not dare to return Damiens' kiss. An exploration of such a microhistorical narrative – somewhat similar to the emphasis placed on re-appropriation and agency by some German historians of everyday life (*Alltagsgeschichte*) – may result in a serious modification of our understandings of power and agency. For, at last, it would be possible to crowd that phantasmatic photograph of the deserted penitentiary of Stateville in Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* with officials, inmates and visitors, with all their contradictions and anxieties.

Though at this stage a definitive statement about Damiens' kiss may be impossible, it is worth noting that his scattered biography simply does not make sense when read through the filter of the genealogy of power. It is as if his actions and the genealogy of power are *incommensurable* to each other, as the kiss and the intentions behind it stand in contradiction with the general history which Foucault intends to write. Although this does not undermine Foucault's interpretation, it underscores the relevance of considering that which seems not to fit well into the genealogy of power: an actual kiss. Power may not be everywhere after all. This is not because the kiss is an act of resistance but because it has *its own logic*, which in this case remains inextricable. Never engraved within the writing of history, the particular meaning of this kissing (or, rather, the lack of it) is something which Damiens tragically took with him. Because the significance of the kissing was prone to be forgotten, only a dog could be bothered about prowling around the

place where both torture and kissing took place. And this is only because, according to Bouton, the officer of the watch who transcribed the dramatic event, the place was still warm.

Principle of Ubiquity vs. Theory of Life Spheres

On the one hand, the irreducibility of a kiss to the dynamics of power suggests that the poststructuralist principle of ubiquity needs to be revisited. On the other, Foucault insisted on many occasions that his work was not to be considered as a monolithic block which settles once and for all the problematic of power relations. Here it is interesting to note Foucault's concern in one of his last interviews where he reproaches himself for not having paid more attention to the Frankfurt School (Raulet, 1983). In the context of the French intellectual life of the 1960s and 1970s, Foucault claims, the influence of the Frankfurt School was negligible. He finds this so worrying that he even claims that had he read in more depth the works of those thinkers 'from Max Weber to Habermas', he would have avoided many detours and would not have said 'a number of stupid things' (Raulet, 1983: 200). Despite the harsh words, I do not believe we should fall into the temptation of trying to find those allegedly 'stupid' things. Rather, it would be more enriching to read this self-criticism as an invitation to reconsider Foucault's work in a critical dialogue with the very tradition he is invoking.

Weber would describe political power as a historical force which, due to its very limitedness, has to establish competitive relationships and alliances with other historical forces. We shift, then, from the consideration of one historical force alone (Foucault's 'power is everywhere') to considering the multidimensional conflict resulting from the plurality of forces/values in contemporary society. Weber describes this situation as an unceasing *struggle of the gods*, although sometimes he also refers to the latter as *daemons* (1970: 148, 152). The choice of language is crucial here, for Weber is drawing on ancient Greek terminology as a means to name that which would be otherwise unnameable within the rationality of a disenchanted world. Through this rhetorical manoeuvre, Weber establishes his own conceptual bricolage as one which does not revolve exclusively within the realm of modern rationality. In this way, he is able to develop what he would call in a different context a *symbolic activity* (Weber, 1968: 403). Weber likewise relies heavily on common terminology found in modern German intellectual history from Goethe's literary works to Nietzsche's will to the tragic (Scaff, 1989: 68–70). Hence, it may be argued that the transition I am proposing here – from the Foucauldian *monism* of power to a *polytheism* of forces – comes about as a result of combining sociological theory with the literary language of Greek tragedy and enchanted worlds. That is, the rhetoric that Weber uses allows him to operate at the fringes of the type of scientific rationality which Foucault himself would much later on call *power-knowledge*.

Weber's theory of life spheres is quite fragmented; it can mainly be traced in a series of well-known essays: 'Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions', 'Politics as a Vocation' and 'Science as a Vocation' (Weber, 1970: 77–156, 323–59). Weber identifies six differential realms or spheres: religion, eroticism, economy, politics, aesthetics and scientific knowledge. In the essay 'Religious Rejections', Weber considers

these spheres as 'the most rational forms reality *can* assume' (1970: 324). In contrast to the anarchic world which the subject would otherwise encounter, each sphere provides particular rules, values and a cultural logic with which to order reality. The problem is that while there may be few inconsistencies when one remains within a single sphere (e.g., religion), conflict is likely to rise when two or more spheres come into play (e.g., religion and scientific knowledge in modern times). This conflict can rise either as a historical tension between social groups and forces, or as a dilemma which individuals have to face. The fragmentation of life is the result of both modern processes of rationalization and the way in which individuals have learned to see the world in the current historical era.

Paul Honigsheim points out that in Weber's description of the conflict between life orders or spheres, one can find not only social theory but also Weber's core existential concern (2000: 99–117). When Weber alludes to life spheres, forces of historical life and value spheres, he is also thinking of the painful fragmentation which is entailed by their appearance after the advent of modernity. To Weber, value differences mean the birth of tragedy, insofar as the clash between life spheres tears and fragments the subject. Regardless of the actions which an individual may carry out in her/his life, actions always generate conflict and guilt. This is explicitly addressed in Weber's well-known distinction between the 'ethic of responsibility' and the rational actions of the modern politician, on the one hand, and the absolute 'ethic of ultimate ends' and brotherliness as articulated in Christ's *Sermon on the Mount*, on the other (1970: 117–28). While the prophet asks you to turn the other cheek when someone hits you, to resist no evil with force and to share all that you have, the politician's responsibility to the population leads her/him to do precisely the contrary by resisting threats to the nation with military force and ensuring that resources and private properties are kept safe from intruders. Hence, if one were to decide to participate in a political struggle in which violence is unavoidable, it would be impossible to pursue the absolute ethic of ultimate ends of the Christian gospels – and vice versa. Weber wrote these pages as a response to the role which pacifism was playing in political debates in Germany during the first decades of the last century. Yet, Honigsheim thinks that therein lies Weber's 'tragic religio-ethical dilemma', in which the ethics of love as an absolute value and the ethics of the politician 'stand in discordant antagonism' (2000: 110).

For Weber, while violence and the daemon of power can be found circulating within the sphere of politics, the sphere of religion rejects these by posing brotherliness and love as the basis of human relations instead. Although there are many moments in history in which the spheres of politics and religion are closely linked, the realms cannot fuse, as 'the genius or daemon of politics lives in an inner tension with the god of love' of the religions of salvation, a group that also includes Eastern religions such as Buddhism (Weber, 1968: 403; 1970: 126). For Foucault, power is autonomous in its operations; but for Weber, it can also be found in competition with other historical forces. This does not mean that, for instance, the spheres of aesthetics and eroticism could not become political at some point. Weber's theory of the radical difference between life spheres rather entails that the core around which the aesthetic or eroticism sphere is formed cannot become *identical* to that of politics. Neither can the cores of scientific knowledge or

religion. It is in this *differentiality* and conflict between life spheres that Weber's theory differs from the poststructuralist principle of ubiquity.

It is unclear whether or not this tension can be overcome. In 'Religious Rejections', Weber argues that his description of the frictions between life orders does not entail the impossibility of a further synthesis, but the gravity of the problem as he presents it in 'Politics as a Vocation' suggests that in fact no synthesis is available to us. Lawrence A. Scaff argues that Weber is able to cope with this tragic condition by turning to intellectual honesty (1989: 112–20), but it is worth mentioning that his religious beliefs also played an important part. According to Weber's friend Honigsheim, as a Lutheran 'by emotion and feeling', Weber could not but react to the struggle between life orders according to the following principle: 'Here I stand. I cannot do otherwise, so help me God' (Honigsheim, 2000: 117). Weber's alleged cry could indeed rival the rhetoric of Greek tragedy, were it not for his Lutheran stance which might have deterred him from performing his existential drama in public. Either way, the tragedy unveiled herein places the Foucauldian principle of ubiquity in an alien place in relation to the Weberian theory of life spheres.

Inside, Outside and Beyond

Once the impact which reading about the shattering of Damiens' body may cause for the contemporary reader is overcome, an alternative interpretation finds it significant that when pain reached its limit, Damiens decided to ask for a kiss from his executioners. If the kiss was of such an extraordinary nature, this may be because, considering the etymology of the word, the kiss was 'out of' and 'beyond a common order of' expected behaviours, previously settled relations and established violent exchanges. Out-of-the-ordinary things happen in all sorts of everyday life situations, and the literary imagination is certainly full of them as well. Nonetheless, social theory may fall short of expectations when it comes to analysing such remarkable phenomena. The problem, as Latour has recently and heatedly pointed out, is that sometimes it feels as if for social critics 'you have to learn to become suspicious of everything people say because of course we all know that they live in the thralls of a complete *illusion* of their real motives' (2004: 229). Should we then suspect hidden motives behind Damiens' kiss? Latour likens this sort of self-restrictive analytical behaviour to the cognitive structure of conspiracy theories, according to which complex social events can only be explained by means of dark motives, unknown political institutions and hidden agendas. Was Damiens' kiss just a kiss, then? Latour goes further and, in the context of emerging conspiracy theories following the 9/11 attacks in the United States, he ironically wonders whether conspirators have turned Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* into their bedtime read (2004: 228). If social theory has permeated into popular culture in this manner, then something has certainly gone wrong along the way.

In such popular misgivings about social theory, Foucault's political philosophy may have been stripped to the bare minimum: 'power is everywhere'. This may say more about its reception than about Foucault's efforts to rethink politics. The phrase 'power is everywhere' may just as well be compared with other equally problematic (insofar as they are non-contextualized) catchphrases such as 'there is nothing outside the text'

and 'religion is the opiate of the masses'. As with any reduction of critical thought to a slogan, there are evident problems that must be confronted here. And yet, as reductive as it may be, the statement 'power is everywhere' may act as a shortcut to the ubiquity principle which permeates the poststructuralist approach to power relations. While absolutely everything and everyone is a suspect in the expansion of power, it has become harder than ever to discuss anything which is not mediated by power without the risk of appearing too uncritical or naïve. It is as if every sentence I utter, every action we perform together, every word I exchange with you is ingrained with power, even if I am merely saying 'I love you'. As a result, it would not be too adventurous to claim that social theory might only rarely be open to discussing what it means to say that social agents can do things *outside* established orders of violence and power relations.

But where would this outside place be? To be sure, equating every discourse, social practice and cultural exchange with power relations alone seems flawed. Yet there is another side to the argument. Individuals cannot just decide to switch off their societal being, and hence the degree of their exposure to and participation in the circuits of power can hardly be reduced to none. Foucault is aware of this dilemma, and if, as we have seen, he has the tendency to produce arguments in favour of the ubiquity principle, he also considers the possibility that power is not, after all, omnipresent (1980: 137–8). In fact, Foucault rejected any description of his work as a theory of power (1982: 208). This tension can be illustrated by comparing the rejection of an outside to power in *Discipline and Punish* with Foucault's coinage of the concept of bio-history in *History of Sexuality*. First, let's consider Foucault's thoughts on the possibility of an outside to power:

> The carceral network does not cast the unassimilable into a confused hell; there is no outside. It takes back with one hand what it seems to exclude with the other. It saves everything, including what it punishes. It is unwilling to waste even what it has decided to disqualify. In this panoptic society of which incarceration is the omnipresent armature, the delinquent is not outside the law; he is, from the very outset, in the law, at the very heart of the law. (1991: 301).

This extract could illustrate not only the Foucauldian approach to delinquency, but any poststructuralist study that places the analysis of power at the forefront of its agenda, from queer theory to post-colonial studies. Since the delinquent cannot be placed 'outside the law', this exemplifies how and why that which was at first considered to be outside is in reality the effect of power, guaranteeing the stability of the system. The outside is thus well inside of a given system of power relations and circuits of knowledge. As power 'saves everything', it logically follows that power is everywhere. Yet this logical leap is based on a false transition from the analysis of the particular case of delinquency to a general framing of how power operates. It hardly follows that because the delinquent is never 'outside' society, there is nothing which escapes power. The kiss of Damiens proved that if any description can be given of the general development of power, it must include the logic of what it cannot assimilate. Along with Weber's tragic Lutheran cry, Damien's kiss defies the prevalent idea that power is to be found everywhere at every time – at least in the sense that there are social actions and discursive practices which

remain excessive to the logic of power. More than moments of resistance, they are moments lost in translation.

Although the current cognitive map of social theory presents the theories of Weber and Foucault as complementary political philosophies, there are enough reasons to consider them as divergent as well. The fundamental differences between Weber's multidimensional model of life spheres and what is essentially a monological analysis of power offered by Foucault require a revision of the idea that the philosophies are merely complementary. Yet, it is striking that, parallel to Weber's talk of daemons, Foucault had also pondered about whether there is something which remains irreducible to power-knowledge. Something of this kind had already occurred in his earliest archaeological works when he approached madness and tragedy as phenomena which could not be merged with humanist rationality due to 'a law which excludes all dialectic and all reconciliation' between them (Foucault, 2001: 103). This lack of assimilation of one into the other falsifies the 'unity of knowledge' which Foucault would later associate with power as well. The unassimilated resurfaces later, albeit in a different form, when he coins the term bio-history in his *History of Sexuality*. Indeed, quite surprisingly, just a few lines after he claims that 'power is everywhere', he also states that it is never capable of exhausting life: 'It is not that life has been totally integrated into techniques that govern and administer it; it constantly escapes them' (1998: 143). It is as if he is trying to argue for a critical difference between what he calls (in that same text) bio-history and bio-power. In contrast to the paragraph about the ubiquity of the carceral society, Foucault now writes:

> If one can apply the term bio-history to the pressures through which the movements of life and the processes of history interfere with one another, one would have to speak of bio-power to designate what brought life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculations and made knowledge-power an agent of transformation of human life. (1998: 143)

This conceptualization of bio-history turning into bio-power has philosophical problems of its own. It creates a new binary distinction between a pre-discursive 'raw' life and the economy of knowledge-power as a transformation of that raw life. The way it is conceived, the binary does not answer the questions of where the boundaries between the two lie, how to distinguish the two poles or how one should epistemologically approach this new division. However, there is an extremely significant development here, as Foucault attempts to put a name, bio-history, to that which is *not-yet* power-knowledge. There persists, therefore, a neglected tension between the power 'which saves everything' (i.e., the ubiquity principle) and the new concept of a historical life which has not yet become domination. The lectures at the Collège de France suggest that Foucault was more interested in bio-politics than bio-history (Foucault, 2003, 2008), so that the ontology which may have branched out of the latter remained underdeveloped. The attention which bio-politics has attracted in the past decade illustrates a lack of interest in bio-history among Foucauldian scholars, as well. However, more recently, Lash, in defining a post-hegemonic theory of power, has emphasized not only a new ontologization of social theory that is somehow different to the ubiquity principle, but also a paradigmatic shift from abstract epistemological frameworks and mechanistic discursive analyses

towards the empirical analysis of the *potentia* of generative power (Lash, 2007). Because this *potentia* is intertwined with 'life', as understood in post-Nietzschean vitalist philosophies, perhaps this new shift might accommodate not only bio-politics, but also bio-history. In any case, this remains as a possibility yet to be further developed.

The poststructuralist critic may argue that the unassimilated which appears excessive to power in the late Foucault has already been traced in subversive practices which seek to divert the unfolding of power towards a more promising future. However, the strategic emphasis on a future time which has not yet arrived is often combined with an unwillingness to answer the question of what constitutes the good life. That is, the future which is not-yet remains too vague an idea unless there are some forms of life which are considered better than others. Diverting power towards an unknown future as a method of offering resistance to power does not necessarily entail any improvement in social conditions. In fact, without a normative sense of direction, this diversion might actually make things worse. In contrast, more bearable forms of life could be closer, that is, within the life that we are always already living. For Weber, the difference between power-mediated and other kinds of phenomena is not temporal in a poststructuralist sense. Difference and disintegration do not lead to the contemplation of a futurity which may (or may not!) be more promising, but rather serve as the primary symptom of the compartmentalization of life caused by the advent of modernity. Indeed, the lack of a stable common ground which might guarantee the rightness of the choices one makes is what leads Weber to think that modernity is the time of tragedy. Perhaps it is here, in the sense of tragedy – which Foucault already displayed in his work on madness - that a liaison with bio-history can be found.

And yet, if anything, a paradoxical outcome can be appreciated after having unbridged Foucault and Weber. The paradox is that, after all, both shared a willingness to enquire about and acknowledge what power is not, rather than solely focusing on the conceptual problem of describing what power is. Both looked out of the corners of their eyes at that which is not controlled by power alone and, even though each developed his own rhetorical and conceptual boxes, in a sense they both worked with the idea in mind that power is not all there is in society. Unbridging their work has brought forward an uncanny possibility: what Weber and Foucault have in common is not their theories of power but their intentions to trespass the limits of political theory.

Leaving the principle of ubiquity aside for a moment opens the possibility of imagining life-oriented concepts which may not rely on the logic of domination which characterizes the will to power-knowledge. Some may remain suspicious about this intellectual gesture, and I cannot think of any reason for not being so. Those who still hold the principle of the ubiquity of power in their analysis of culture and society may find going beyond power a mere chimera, but then Weber's concern would lack the seriousness of a vital problem. Whenever the stance 'power is everywhere' becomes an unquestioned axiom, perhaps even a prejudice, the possibility of practices which are not mediated, or at least not *only* mediated, by the will to power is immediately cancelled. By the same token, alternative forms of life are dissolved into the principle of ubiquity, and the historical master narrative in which power has neither agonizing contesters nor normative alternatives is once again reinstated. There is still the possibility of calling 'it' resistance,

but, then, 'it' would always be shaped by what it allegedly resists rather than posing a more bearable life in its own right.

References

Alford CF (2000) What Would it Matter if Everything Foucault said about Prison Were Wrong? Discipline and Punish after Twenty Years' *Theory and Society* 29(1): 125–46.

Berard TJ (2001) Michel Foucault, The *History of Sexuality*, and the Reformulation of Social Theory, *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 29(3): 203–27.

Colliot-Thélène C (2009) Modern Rationalities of the Political: From Foucault to Weber, *Max Weber Studies* 9(1/2): 165–87.

Davidson AI (1986) Archaeology, Genealogy, Ethics, in Hoy DC (ed.) *Foucault: A Critical Reader*. Oxford and New York: Basil Blackwell.

Dews P (1987) *Logics of Disintegration: Post-structuralist Thought and the Claims of Critical Theory*. London and New York: Verso.

Dreyfus HL and Rabinow P (1982) *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*. New York and London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Foucault M (1977) Nietzsche, Genealogy, History, in Bouchard DF (ed.) *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

—— (1980) *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*. New York: Pantheon Books.

—— (1982) The Subject and Power, in Dreyfus HL and Rabinow P (eds) *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*. New York and London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

—— (1991) *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. London: Penguin Books.

—— (1998) *The History of Sexuality*. London: Penguin Books.

—— (2001) *Madness and Civilization*. London: Routledge.

—— (2003) *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–76*. New York: Picador.

—— (2008) *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–79*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Fox NJ (1998) Foucault, Foucauldians and Sociology, *The British Journal of Sociology* 49(3): 415–33.

Fraser N (1989) *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Ginzburg C (1980) *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Heiskala R (2001) Theorizing Power: Weber, Parsons, Foucault and Neostructuralism, *Social Science Information* 40(2): 241–64.

Hindess B (1995) *Discourses of Power: From Hobbes to Foucault*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Honigsheim P (2000)*The Unknown Max Weber*. New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers.

Lash S (2007) Power after Hegemony: Cultural Studies in Mutation? *Theory, Culture & Society* 24(3): 55–78.

Latour B (2004) Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern, *Critical Inquiry* 30(2): 225–48.

Lowrie W (1955) The Kiss of Peace: A Declaration of Koinonia, *Theology Today* 12(2): 236–42.

McCarthy T (1990) The Critique of Impure Reason: Foucault and the Frankfurt School, *Political Theory* 18(3): 437–69.

O'Neill J (1986) The Disciplinary Society: From Weber to Foucault, *The British Journal of Sociology* 37(1): 42–60.

Penn M (2003) Ritual Kissing, Heresy and the Emergence of Early Christian Orthodoxy, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 54(5): 625–40.

Raulet G (1983) Structuralism and Post-Structuralism: An Interview with Michel Foucault, *Telos* 55(Spring): 195–211.

Scaff LA (1989) *Fleeing the Iron Cage: Culture, Politics and Modernity in the Thought of Max Weber*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Sedwick EK (1991) *Epistemology of the Closet*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Steger MB (2006) Searching *Satya* Through *Ahimsa*: Gandhi's Challenge to Western Discourses of Power, *Constellations* 13(3): 332–53.

Steiner P (2008) Foucault, Weber and the History of the Economic Subject, *The European Journal of the History of Economic Thought* 15(3): 503–27.

Taylor C (1986) Foucault on Freedom and Truth, in Hoy DC (ed.) *Foucault: A Critical Reader*. Oxford and New York: Basil Blackwell.

Weber M (1968) *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*. New York: Bedminster Press.

Weber M (1970) *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Zévaès AL (1933) *Damiens Le Régicide.* Paris La: Nouvelle Review Critique.

About the author

Juan J. Jiménez-Anca is a lecturer in Spanish Studies at Aston University, Birmingham, UK. His main research areas are Spanish/European contemporary philosophy and critical theory, gender and sexuality studies, and political/cultural economy.